

House Panel Warns It's Willing to Fight If Pentagon Pushes

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1 (UPI)—The House Armed Services Committee organized under new management today and served notice on the Pentagon that it did not intend to be pushed around.

Taking a cue from an opening statement by Representative L. Mendel Rivers, the new chairman, senior members of both parties warned against any Defense Department tendency to ignore Congressional responsibilities in providing "for the common defense."

"I don't intend to overlook that part of the Constitution," said Mr. Rivers, a South Carolina Democrat, after calling the committee to order.

It was the committee's first meeting since Representative Carl Vinson, Democrat of Georgia, retired from Congress last Jan. 3. Mr. Vinson headed the committee for 14 years.

Mr. Rivers said that the Defense Department seemed to discount "the future of manned [weapons] systems." He said he would name a subcommittee to check on this matter.

"I have in mind a follow-up for the B-52," he said, referring to the experimental bomber program that was dropped before the plan had gone into production.

"Also an improved manned interceptor," Mr. Rivers went on. "We don't have one; I don't care what the newspapers and the Defense Department say, we don't have one."

Representative F. Edward Hébert, Democrat of Louisiana,

said some Pentagon officials, "do not believe a Congress is necessary."

"They twist our decisions," he said. "They take the law unto themselves. If this continues, our nation is gone."

Today's protests reflected a long-standing protest by some committee members against what they consider unilateral decisions by Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara.

Under Mr. Vinson's leadership, the committee usually took the sting out of such protests through compromise.

The committee vested in Mr. Rivers all the powers previously held by Mr. Vinson.

The only announced change in past practice was to hire a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent, Ralph Marshall, for investigative work. Mr. Rivers said he never was able to persuade Mr. Vinson that such an employee was needed.